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ABSTRACT

A current movement in qualitative research is a preoccupation with representation of the "other" (Denzin and Lincoln 1994). Feminists, critical theorists and postmodernists have questioned the dominant, legitimized social order and remained sensitive to the multiple issues related to and emanating from power. This paper briefly reviews the critical and postmodern literatures and points to areas that are both promising but also puzzling. The paper then discusses how the researcher found herself in a double bind as she grappled with issues of power and representation at the intersection of theory and method. The paper describes how the issues of power and representation were important to the study of a school-linked, integrated social-services initiative in two low-income, racial-minority neighborhoods. As a methodological response to concerns raised in critical and postmodern epistemologies about the crisis of representation and power, the researcher attempted to introduce voice, remove herself from representation of others, and allay concerns of power "over." The paper describes methodological strategies consistent with the researcher's epistemological stance: asking and paying adult and child residents to conduct peer-on-peer interviews; including participants in the design of research questions; and "recycling" data back to the participants for purposes of verification. In an example of the "double bind," the researcher transcribed interviews verbatim in Black English to avoid imposing her "white academic" voice on neighborhood residents. Participants angrily charged that the transcripts made them look unintelligent. The researcher was also caught in the double bind of being a researcher and not being a researcher. Even if researchers try to eliminate or reduce their power through collaborative methods, are they really reducing or eliminating power? To the extent that everyone has questions, power lies with who does the asking and whose truths are being told. (Contains 30 references.) (LMI)

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# The "Double Bind" of Re-presentation in Qualitative Research Methods

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The "Double Bind" of Re-presentation in Qualitative Research Methods

Introduction

During an afternoon of observations in one of my two research sites - a low-income neighborhood in a Midwestern city - I looked upon a group of girls with fascination as they gracefully engaged in the jump rope game, "Double Dutch." Interestingly, the jump rope game of Double Dutch is played by swinging two ropes inwardly so that the ropes go in opposite (or contradictory) directions. Watching the game made me aware that entry into this game takes a certain amount of measured observation from the outside. The potential jumper stands ready with eager, but calculated, anticipation of entry. She knows that participation requires an understanding of the synchronous nature of the twin ropes; she knows it is a matter of carefully and skillfully entering in between the two spinning lines - or she will get caught in the middle of a double bind.

In the research I am currently conducting, I have often felt that I am in this game. There is a rhythm to the interplay of qualitative methods and the various theoretical perspectives that inform the inquiry. In my inquiry and analysis of a social policy initiative in two low-income, high crime neighborhoods, I rely on critical and postmodern theories, for I want to consider the issues of power, voice, praxis and representation. As an observer and inquirer - a qualitative researcher - I have tried to skillfully and attentively negotiate my way into the lives of the research participants to hear their voices, and bring forth their thoughts about power, through interview techniques that involve the research participants directly, and through a "reflexivity" technique as a form of data verification.

In this paper, I briefly review the critical and postmodern literature(s) that frame this inquiry, and in the examination of the literature, I point to areas that are both promising but also puzzling to me as a qualitative researcher. I then discuss how, in the end, I found myself in a double bind as I tripped over the non-synchronous nature of theory and method.

Issues of power and representation at the intersection of theory and method

A current movement in qualitative research, according to Denzin and Lincoln (1994), is a preoccupation with representation of the "other." They refer to this preoccupation as a "crisis of representation." Research, many have argued (Marcus and Fischer, 1986; Clifford and Marcus, 1986), needs to be more reflexive - calling into question the former models of truth, meaning and classic (accepted) norms of representation. Qualitative research is becoming more political, more activist-oriented, by stripping away pretense and tightly held conventions about what is subjective (not objective) and what is complex (not simple). The movement is to hear more from the traditionally oppressed voices - who after all are the authorities of their own lives - not from the researcher.

I take seriously the issue of hearing the multiplicities of voices, and I take seriously that I am not an authority on my research subjects' lives. These issues of "re-presentation" and reflexivity pose serious conundrums for research, I have discovered. After all, I call myself a researcher, but what is my place in the lives of "other(s)"? In developing the research design for this study, I began to consider myself a "research facilitator" and less of an authority. The interplay of theory, method and analysis, or the "interdependence of method, theory and values" (Lather, 1991, p. 14, emphasis added)

became tantamount as I set out to design and conduct the research and as I collected and analyzed the data.

Theorists have raised concerns (Lather, 1991; Clifford and Marcus, 1986; Marcus and Fischer, 1986; Gitlin, 1994; Marcus, 1994, Denzin, 1994) about the implications of "re-presenting" micro- and macro-societal issues in contemporary discourses. The sensitivity emanates from a concern about how power operates (i.e., power related to dominant voice, totalizing or "grand" narratives), and from a concern about how research operates as power.

In my study of social support services collaborating with public schools in low-income, racial minority neighborhoods, the issues of power and representation are important. The importance in attending to critiques on power, many argue, is that social programs often keep low-income and racial minorities disenfranchised, unempowered, and trapped in a cycle of enablement (Kozol, 1991; Hagedorn, 1995).

In the explaining of "reality," theorists are criticizing the dominant discourse that has asserted a brand of "legitimacy" over the social order of things (see Gitlin, 1994). Feminists, critical theorists and postmodernists from a variety of disciplines (sociology, philosophy, literature, art, anthropology, education) can be given credit for contributing to questioning this dominant, legitimized order of things, and for remaining sensitive to the multiple issues related to and emanating from power. It is from this emerging literature that I take my cues on how and why I conduct my research from a critical/postmodern perspective, and how these perspectives shape and inform my method and research.

As I reflect on how theoretical perspectives inform my inquiry and on what epistemological grounds my inquiry rests, I ask myself "who am I to represent this

intersection?" And, "how can I represent this intersection in a way that honors - and does not take away from - the lives of the research participants?"

Context of inquiry

The social policy inquiry that has motivated my thinking about the interplay of theory and method is situated within a broader social policy movement of addressing the unmet needs of "at risk" children and the social and economic maladies that afflict their families. One educational policy response to these maladies is school-linked services[1]. The notion behind school-linked services is to coordinate the fragmented services that schools, social work agencies, public health and police departments can offer "at risk" students and families in a preventive or interventionist way. In a phrase, to "tighten the safety net" so that fewer students slip through the system holes.

My inquiry is set in two neighborhoods in which a school-linked services effort is underway. The neighborhoods, as mentioned earlier, are characterized by low income, racial minority, single headed households - demographic features that are "new arrivals" in this otherwise middle class, white, highly educated, mid-sized Midwestern city. Indeed, the two neighborhoods have been constructed in the daily press, and therefore by the readers, to look, feel, vibrate and smell very differently from the whole of the city in which they are located. The neighborhoods, and the people living in them, are "on the margins" of this socially

[1] Comprehensive services goes by any number of names: integrated services; school-linked services; full-service schools; collaborative school-community services; coordinated services, etc. The comprehensive service effort looks different in different communities depending on the needs, the targeted populations, the goals, etc.

affluent city. There has been significant coverage in the local daily press on the conditions of these two neighborhoods, and press on the school-linked services effort as well, which I will refer to as Community-Based Collaboration for families.[2]

Two spinning lines of thought: jumping in

The brevity of my discussion here of two major lines of thought - critical and postmodern theory - will do little justice to either. However, in an oversimplified manner, I attempt to summarize my understandings of and uses for these two theoretical perspectives that inform my analysis, the competing arguments for each of them, and ultimately where I position myself and why.

**Critical Theory**

A critical theory perspective has many and broad applications, although it has been defined primarily in relation to power and emancipation from power. The orientation is not only emancipation from power but it insists on a shift toward finding one's own power. Exercising "agency" for change and for social justice is the desired outcome from the critical perspective. The central focus for critical theorists has been on issues of class (neo-Marxism such as Apple, 1979,1982; Anyon,1980), but many contemporary theorists (feminists, "otherists") have applied the premises of the critical framework (social justice, change, empowerment) to examine other oppressed, under-represented, socially constructed categories (sexual orientation, gender, race). Some scholars have pointed out that the critical theory perspective is not identical to feminists and otherists who fall within the critical paradigm, but

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[2] Community-Based Collaborative for Families is a pseudonym I use in the interest of confidentiality.

who focus on marginalized/disenfranchised groups of people. Rather, there is an argument that there are distinct differences among them (Ellsworth, 1989; Capper, 1994).

Some aims of critical theory research include involving disempowered or disenfranchised others in the dialogue of critical inquiry (Freire, 1973); transforming society by sharing power (Giroux cited in Lather, 1991); providing research informants access to power and privilege (LeCompte and McLaughlin, 1994); and enabling "those under study to change their conditions" (Tierney paraphrasing Gitlin and Weiler, 1994: 110).

Implications of doing research from a critical theory perspective include praxis, which I understand as theory-informed action in pursuit of justice. It is action in a way that combines theory that is both relevant to the world but is nurtured by actions in it (Lather, 1991: 11-12). Another implication for critical theory research is "reflexivity," which refers to the researchers engagement, through written text, in a dialectical process among the researcher, the informants, the data, the researcher's ideological assumptions, and the relevant socio-cultural forces (Tierney referenced in Conrad, et al., 1993). The critical inquiry process is guided by asking such questions as whose interests are being served by things as they are? (Sirotnik and Oakes, 1986 cited in Capper, 1994). Similarly, it is guided by an understanding of how research participants view their own world; how the inquiry is mutually educative; how the research design can accommodate a dialogic condition for critique and social action and how the inquiry can stimulate a self-sustaining process (Lather, 1991).

In many and varied ways, the critical theory perspective resonates loudly with me. In my research, I am interested in the pursuit of social justice, in dialogics with the research informants, in emancipatory research design, in self-reflexivity, in sharing power and

examining the various strands and relations to power. However, at the same time, I see some discrepancies in the research and theoretical literature on power whereby critical theorists assume that power lays elsewhere, certainly everywhere but with the research informant(s). Critical theory and critical ethnographies have done well to point out power differences and social inequities (Willis, 1981; Lather, 1991); and they have made overtures to include and engage the research informants (LeCompte and McLaughlin, 1994). But I don't see in the literature that many critically-informed theorists/researchers have gone far enough to examine power from anywhere but "up above." To me, the conception of "power over" that has so successfully driven critical ethnographic data collection, research design and data analysis is suspiciously frictionless in its "outcome." Summaries and conclusions of critical ethnographies on cultural production and social re/production, for example, have proven predictable. The reader knows, or has a sense, of a "bad guy" (though we never know exactly who the bad guy is), and the reader sympathizes with the powerless research subject(s). Furthermore, the researcher with his/her attendant power, in the portrayal of all of this, is somehow invisible.

Another aspect of the frictionless telling of "re-presentation" from a critical perspective is the positivistic orientation. Critical theorists appear to be "hard-nosed empiricists, work within closed theoretical systems, and follow the canons of good science" (Denzin,1994:511) There appears to be a direct, almost indisputable, correlation between cause and effect. Still another unsettling element of critical theory is what Capper (1994) describes as the "all or nothing" phenomena of power. Either a person possesses power or does not. Power is assumed to be tightly concentrated in the hands of a few, indistinguishable power elites.[3]

This perspective on human actors presumes not only powerlessness, but passivity on the part of the subject(s). Similarly, critical theorists talk about empowerment in abstract, nonspecific terms as evidenced by the universalistic, global categorization of "the oppressed" (Apple,1979, 1982; Fine, 1991; Freire, 1973; Willis, 1981). According to many who subscribe to the critical perspective, there is little specificity of marginalization. It assumes that oppressive social and political structures and actions have similar effects on all marginalized people. However, there is debate within and among critical theorists/postpositivist who see that global audiences require particular political involvement. Popkewitz (1991) refers to this as a "popularist" tendency and argues for a politics of specificity; Ellsworth (1989) argues for specificity of engagement through political practices. I concur with the observations that suggest that effects of power on the oppressed are not universal. I would argue that the universalistic assumption is ill-conceived by virtue of the fact that the assumption removes power from any actor - it assumes a passive participation in the world around them, but this perspective is not accounted for in the work of critical theorists.

In sum, critical theorists in their research attempt "to assist the examined human beings in their efforts to improve their quality of life and to have more control over it" (Stanfield, 1994: 174). This is a good start into any critical inquiry, but I don't believe critical theory, especially as it is embodied in critical ethnography, goes far enough. I don't believe I am alone in sensing a kind of futility in the somewhat dated (and perhaps narrowly

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[3] A striking example of the misleading understanding of "power from above" is Popkewitz's (1991) reference to the "state elites" in his description of educational state reform initiatives in Wisconsin in the 1980s. One would have to know the bureaucratic "state elites" to appreciate how humorous and ridiculous this characterization of power is. In this way, "state elites" is truly a social construct (cf. pp. 198-199).

conceived) notion of intellectual radicalism in neo-Marxism and critical theory.[4] Questions about the purpose of research come to the surface for me. I ask myself, Who is the audience? Will this "new knowledge" wend its way to re-formulation of education; Whose purposes did it serve? And who benefitted?

**Postmodern perspective**

Postmodernism is more often defined by what it is not than by what it is. Marcus and Fischer put it differently:

> Present conditions of knowledge are defined not so much by what they are as by what they come after. In general discussion within the humanities and social sciences, the present indeed is often characterized by "postparadigm" - postmodern, poststructuralism, post-Marxism, for example (1986: 8).

Perhaps it is more accurate to talk about what postmodern thought does rather than what it is. Postmodernism examines the modernist faith in rationality and reason - a faith and reason which are now being "exploded" (Tierney, 1994:111). It calls into question the authority behind intellectual discourse and its claims to privileged "truths." Hassard (1993 quoting Powers, 1990) defined postmodern theorists as those who stand for 'death of reason.' Indeed, postmodernists reject rationalism which is borne out of ethnocentrism; it rejects "essentialist" or "foundationalist" ways of knowing and viewing "truth." Postmodernism "troubles clarity"[5] and problematizes the status quo, the "objectivists" and positivists. Instead, postmodernists favor subject-centered pluralistic discourses which are marked by differences,

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[4] Maxine Greene used the phrase "old intellectual radicalism" in a book review to explain some of the departures from critical theory, I credit her for putting into words what I have been feeling.

[5] At a recent meeting of the American Educational Research Association (1995), Patti Lather used this description of postmodernism as the title of her address.

opposites, paradoxes and enigmas (Capper, 1994). Grand narratives and absolutes have been abandoned to make room for and to hear from differences, multiple voices and multiple truths.

Postmodernism is broadly conceived and broadly used. Perhaps because of the "benign authority" connected with it (Greene, 1993: 209), it is more difficult to define. Ultimately, scholars argue that postmodernists "shy away from the modernist idea of 'defining' postmodernism" in a reductionistic, specific way (Capper, 1994: 19).

Attention and sensitivity to the multiple voices and differences is perhaps postmodernism's greatest contribution to current thinking in philosophy, literature, art and the social sciences. However, this new vein of thought is not without its problems and contradictions.

As a qualitative researcher, I am finding my way into the spinning discourses around issues of voice and pluralities, but as I conduct research, I find the postmodern literature puzzling and problematic for me. However, I enter into this critique of postmodernism with an acknowledgment. Among the many contributions that postmodernist thinking has made in social sciences, one significant contribution is its departure from the conventions of modernist thinking which rarely allows for tensions and disruptions. On the contrary, postmodernists allow an "appreciation for contradiction, dissensus and complexity" (Capper, 1993: 29), as opposed to neatly packaged arguments which are 'grounded" or based in unquestioned positivistic, scientific claims to truth.

Accordingly, I will exercise dissensus by raising areas of tension that are problematic for me, and one is embodied in the idea of 'death of reason.' At one and the same time,



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postmodernists seem to want to remove the foundations of foundationalism only to replace the void with "post foundations." Perhaps Lather anticipated my uneasiness when she "urged those feeling such discomfort [with the void] not to rush to create a new structure in place of the old" (1991: 443). However, new structures, in the name of theory, are appearing in the literature. A dizzying statement from Best and Kellner (1991) adds to my discomfort:

> [T]he term 'postmodern theory' may seem problematical, since postmodern critiques are directed against the notion of 'theory' itself - which implies a systematically developed conceptual structure anchored in the real (p. x).

Nonetheless, Best and Kellner go on to posit "theory" in any case. The idea of postmodernism eschews "truth seeking" when in the process of using and discussing it, a new brand of truth or reality is constructed in the form of 'postmodern' theory.

There appear to be inherent contradictions in not claiming to position one's self within a position of truth while advancing a theoretical construct at the same time. If foundationalists are constructors of knowledge and postmodernists are deconstructors of the foundational knowledge, are they not in essence committing a similar act? Questioning and challenging various lines of thinking, and being comfortable with the tension, is a valuable and valid contribution made by the postmodernists. Where I see postmodernists entering a precarious non-truth zone, however, is when the posture moves into a position of non-truth seeking whilst they construct a reality (a truth?) of what non-truth seeking is.

What I understand the various postmodern theorists to mean is that there is no "truth" to be proven by empirical evidence, and there is no "truth" to be unveiled through narrative or ethnographic inquiry, but rather what is "true" depends on "whose truth is being told" (Scheurich, 1994: 23). Greenfield (1978, quoted in Scheurich, 1994: 21) stated that "the

relationship between explanation and reality is at best uncertain." This statement summarizes the better part of the postmodern contradiction.

The uncertainty of a relationship between explanation and reality poses significant problems for qualitative research. Does it eliminate the virtue of social science inquiry, thus reducing action, activism and critical inquiry to rubble? This is where I get "tripped up" by the postmodern theoretical discourse as it applies to research, for I cannot engage in educational research and not feel some responsibility for it and to the research informants. In my attempt to get in the rhythm of postmodern ponderings related to how social scientists view and attempt to make sense of the world, I am asked to stay away from making sense. In facing the research participants who want to know what I am "finding," and what I can tell them about what I am "learning," I cannot stay away from trying to make sense if I am to honor their immediate and urgent questions.

Thus, where am I situated in all of this? Part of the nature of the task of qualitative social science is to "make sense" of human actions, social contexts and organizational order. It is a difficult and complex task. Critical theorists argue that research "reveals" different discourses of power and thus aids in clarifying positions within situations of conflict (Carlson, 1992; Capper, 1994). As postmodernists see it, the "proper role of the intellectual/scholar/researcher is based on a belief that their research and theories should be distanced from social formations and discursive practices being studied and analyzed" (Popkewitz, 1991). Again, the story that comes out of research (qualitative or quantitative), of course, is based on the whose truth is being told. Oddly enough, I place myself and my qualitative inquiry "squarely in the middle" of both of these epistemologies.

Methodological manifestations

What would the research design and method of collecting and analyzing data look like if it were shaped and informed by critical/postmodernist theory? Could I work toward a more progressive reconstruction of my observations and transcript analysis that takes into account multiple perspectives without imposing my voice on the analysis while at the same time facilitate "sense making" that addresses the urgency of the research participants' every day issues?

To answer these questions, I attempted to use three different methodological strategies. One strategy was to ask (and pay) adult and child residents in the neighborhoods to conduct peer-on-peer interviews rather than interview the residents myself. The idea of having children interview children and adult residents interview other adult residents seemed to address the power differences around my race, social class, educational status and my non-resident status in the neighborhood. This design was loosely based on the FOXFIRE method, or an adoption of it - referred to as MAPS (Magill Action Planning System) (Vandercook and York, 1990).

A second data collection technique that I used was to place myself in a role of facilitator rather than omniscient researcher who "captures" data and reveals the truth or sense about what I think I observed or interpreted. As a facilitator, I asked willing and interested research participants to be a part of designing the interview questions collaboratively. It also involved asking informants to keep a journal (either on tape recorder or in diaries) of their own observations and self-reflections after the interviews were conducted.

A third technique is borrowed from Lather (1986, 1991) who suggests that reflexivity is gained through "recycling" data back to research participants for purposes of verification. The idea is to, again, bring research participants into yet another stage of research which is data analysis and verification.

Not only did I think of the role of researcher-as-facilitator as a way of honoring the multiple voices of those who are otherwise silenced and marginalized, but I viewed this as a way of engaging research "subjects" in a process of self-reflection. For those who expressed interest or consent, I viewed these methodological techniques as a way of getting participants to answer their own questions about what is going on in their lives as part of this social policy called Community-Based Collaboration for Families.

Findings: A double bind of theory and method

The technique in conducting peer-on-peer interviews was to conduct training on interview techniques, such as establishing rapport, and probing the interviewees with follow-up questions. Admittedly, such techniques that are well familiar to qualitative researchers are learned over a semester-long methods course; training for the adults and students was not to the depth and length that might be expected for good qualitative research training. The training was only six sessions at two hours in length. The skills-training was rudimentary at best.

Before conducting peer-on-peer interviews, I asked newly-trained interviewers to offer feedback in the design of the interview protocol. These interviewers were at first reticent to speak up about what questions should be asked, but eventually they began to discuss informally a few problems that they had observed in the neighborhood with

Community-Based Collaborative for Families. For example, there was an instance with one of the neighborhood social workers that the resident interviewers felt should be addressed. The residents stated that they felt that some social workers can "mess up people lives." I asked, "What if others feel the way you do about social workers? Should we ask that in the interviews?" After some hesitation, the residents agreed that they would ask others if they felt that social workers mess up people's lives. At its foundation, this question about 'messing up lives' gets at the epistemologically-informed issues of power and representation. However, in the course of the interviewing period, very few interviews were completed with this new question on the protocol when the resident interviews spoke up at a briefing meeting and reported that many people didn't feel comfortable with the question. Moreover, the trained interviewers did not like asking the question. They reported to me that residents were "uncomfortable" answering the question, and that they were uncomfortable asking it. The research subjects (interviewers and interviewees) did not want to talk about the "power" of the social workers in their lives. After some discussion, the resident interviewers agreed to remove the question from the protocol.

Another poignant example of my attempt to hear "voices" of the residents came up at another briefing session after a number of interviews had been conducted. In a data review session with the typed-up interview transcripts in hand, the adult interviewers pointed out to me that "the big holes" (or blank lines) in the transcript were there because some interviewers had chosen to turn the tape recorder off at times at which the resident interviewees were speaking negatively about Community-Based Collaborative for

Families. The residents admitted that they did not want "such negativity" to be heard or talked about. At a pivotal point in which research methods could have been instrumental in hearing various "voices," the residents interviewers chose to quiet or silence the voices. This choice or action was their way of not wanting to reveal underlying negative issues and tensions about the social policy initiative in their neighborhood.

The children as interviewers responded similarly to "negative" interviews. I was witness to many of the interviews between the children at which the same type of "silencing" occurred. When students commented that the community nurse was "nosey," or that the neighborhood cop was "always hangin' around too much," the student interviewers would turn the interview into a "pep talk" of sorts: "Oh come on," one student said, "don't you think that Don is a good guy (referring to the Cop)? Don't you like the baseball cards that he hands out?" In many cases, the student interviewers ended up cajoling the student interviewees into a session about the positive experiences of having a cop, and school personnel, nurses and social workers in the neighborhood. When pressed to talk about the "silencing" that was going on in interviews, students and adults alike stated in any number of ways that the "university" was going to read the transcripts.

As "the university," the researcher - whether cloaked as a "facilitator" or not - I still held sway or had power over the outcome of these interview transcripts. The interviewers were not comfortable with this form of "truth" being revealed - to me and presumably other "outsiders."

Another technique that was built into the research design - with the idea of hearing from the participants- was the idea of "recycling" the data back to the residents, per Lather's (1986) suggestion to verify data. Accordingly, I asked select residents - members of a neighborhood advisory board to Community-Based Collaborative for Families - to respond to the summary of the interview transcripts, after they had been "clustered" by themes. I offered the summary of data as an opportunity to have them confirm or disconfirm our preliminary analysis. I saw this as not only a method of data verification, but also as a way to "give back" information to the advisory board as a form of "needs assessment" data.

The interview transcripts were typed up verbatim, and quotes were clustered verbatim. I could not have predicted the reactions from the residents. They were angered and appalled that I had left the transcripts in true form - in "Black English," complete with slang and dialect. They expressed insult and anger, and were vehement that the grammar and slang that was in print not get circulated. The first response to the data "recycling" of the "authentic voices" was stated by a woman: "Are you trying to make us look stupid?" Another woman said, "I am so upset just reading the first page that I refuse to look at the rest of it." After considerable explanation about how I did not want to impose my Anglo and academic voice on top of the residents voices, I was told that I was "doing damage to the reputation" of the neighborhood by leaving the transcripts as they were. The resident advisory board members asked me to "prettify" or Anglicize the transcripts into proper grammar so that the residents of the neighborhood would not appear as stupid.

Discussion: Caught in the double bind

As a methodological response to the concerns raised in critical and postmodern epistemologies about the "crisis" of representation and power in method, I attempted to introduce voice, remove my self from representation of "other(s)" and allay concerns of power "over." The double bind was that I, of course, did not want the research participants/residents to appear stupid. I did not want to "whiten" the Black English by imposing "my language." Could meaning still have been conveyed had I done so? In retrospect, I believe it could have. But what of the emancipatory literature that says I, as a white academic, am not supposed to impose my voice to represent others?

As another liberatory technique, I attempted to involve residents in reflexive and participatory ways which was meant to "honor" multiple voices and provide access to power through the research process - a position that researchers presumably hold.

I was caught in a "double bind" of being a researcher and not being a researcher. I often asked myself, had I conducted the interviews would the interviewees have revealed the same things to me about social workers messing up peoples lives? Would I have been able to build enough trust with residents to get them to talk about their concerns about the cops and social worker and the schools?. I am not entirely convinced that I can ever gain another's perspective fully. I only know that had I heard the interviewees say negative things about the policy initiative, I would not have turned off the tape recorder or turned the interview into a pep talk. But as an "other," I may not have gained the opportunity - the trust and rapport - to even hear these things in the first place.

Conclusion

The synchronous lines of thought on theory and method were being "crossed" by the research participants, placing me as a researcher in the classic double bind: No matter how I aligned theory and method, by involving research participants access in the research process or by "presenting" data in the most authentic form possible, in the end, I was damned if I did and damned if I didn't. This is not to suggest that there is no way to get at the concerns of "re-presentation" and "voice," and the entangled issues of power and method. I still remain open to exploring alternative techniques at conducting qualitative research. I still believe, as a researcher, that there are things to learn and that we as researchers are in the business of learning and sharing and creating knowledge. But, what I cannot reconcile, and what I pose to the qualitative research community, is the question about how we "get out of the double bind?" We are either in research - with all of its attendant issues of power and representation - or we are not.

Ultimately, what I think I am responding to is the emancipatory theories espoused in critical and postmodern literature(s) that suggest we as researcher have power in our methods. Even if we try to reduce or eliminate our power as researchers - especially through collaborative research methods - are we, in fact, really reducing or eliminating power? Or, do we have the kind of power that we commend to ourselves. Perhaps the research participants hold as much or more power as we do, for example, by not responding to our methods, or by constructing "truths" as they would like us to see it? But, I am still the researcher and I am still in a position of power by conducting research. I am the one, after all, who entered into the inquiry into their lives and

experiences in their neighborhoods. The residents did not ask to conduct research; they do not have the same agenda in mind as I do necessarily - that agenda being to elicit issues of power, agency, voice. And if they do share that agenda, there still is no natural connection between the way they view and want to talk about issues of power and the way that I do in my academic-based inquiry. Asking questions and expecting answers is a very powerful act in itself. To the extent that we all have questions, power lies with who does the asking and whose truths are being told.

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